

ROSETTE

The Official Student Publication of PAREF Woodrose School

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

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WE, THE EDITORS AND STAFF OF THE ROSETTE, AIM TO CREATE AND PRESENT WORKS THAT ENGAGE OUR READERS INTELLECTUALLY, EMOTIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY. WE ASPIRE TO PROMOTE SCHOOL PRIDE AND REPRESENT OUR CRAFT'S DYNAMISM, DEPTH, AND CREATIVITY – ELEMENTS WHICH DEFINE WOODROSE STUDENTS.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE REFLECTION, AND TO ELICIT RESPONSES FROM OUR READERS BY PROVIDING THEM WITH THOUGHT-PROVOKING INSIGHTS. FINALLY, THROUGH OUR WORK, WE STRIVE TO BE MODELS OF TRUTH AND SUBSTANCE, HELPING WOODROSE STUDENTS DEVELOP A BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE AND ATTAIN GREATER AWARENESS OF RELEVANT ISSUES.

Knowledge on Mutation, THE UNDERSTANDING OF SOLUTIONS

by Ruru Gonong

In light of COVID-19's ever changing nature, people have been following its development and made aware of the studies behind the virus' mutation into several variants. As these have been actively examined, certain protocols, procedures, and requirements have been implemented. Therefore, one must be able to review the sciences explaining this phenomenon for the further understanding and efficiency of those necessities mentioned.

SARS-COV-2 is the virus COVID-19 originated from. Just like other viruses, they invade and multiply in the cells of living things. Once they do so, they hijack and infect the host cell. This allows the viruses to gain energy and replicate its own genetic material, made up of DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) or RNA (Ribonucleic acid). To put it simply, viruses are nonliving things that require a host (cells) to survive.

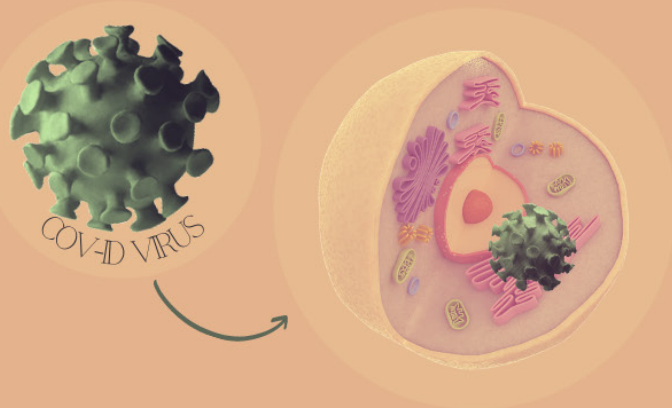
Based on past studies, viruses usually enter the human body through the mouth or the nose before latching onto a cell and infecting others. The inability of the immune system to fight the virus will cause one to fall ill. However, a virus changes and multiplies over time. This is made possible through its mutation.

According to the National Human Genome Research Institute, mutation is a change in a DNA sequence when a virus infects a host, undergoes cell division, and more. In the words of Dr. Francis S. Collins, the former director of the National Institutes of Health, it is simply "a mistake made in a DNA sequence as it's being copied." This happens if a strand of either DNA or RNA pairs incorrectly to another and creates a different coding in the cell, resulting in a mutation. With the large number of replications viruses make of itself, these copying mistakes are bound to happen. Therefore, there is an increase in the risk of new variants of the virus, which can potentially contain one or more mutations of the virus's origin. Though, it is worth noting that some variants do not persist while others do.

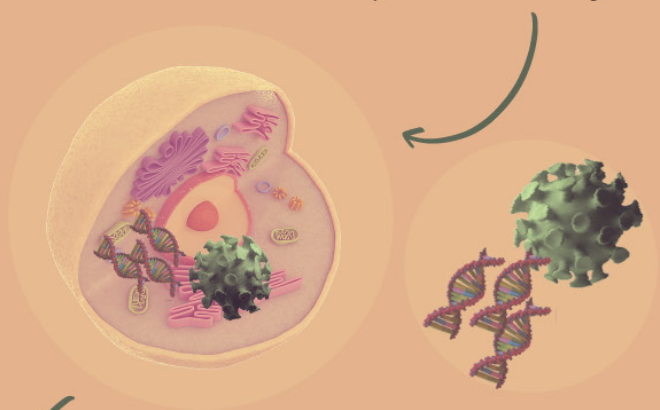
What can be done to prevent the mutation of viruses? The World Health Organization (2021) says,

HOW IT HAPPENS : VIRUS MUTATION

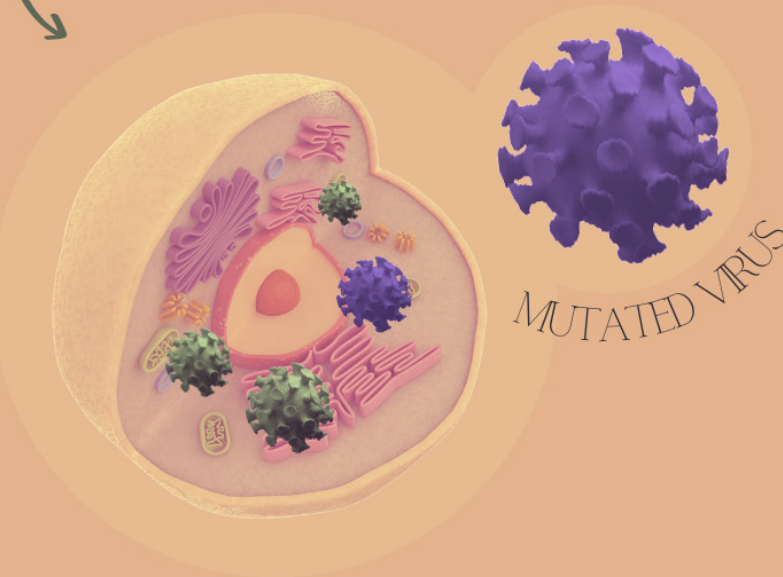
Virus comes into contact with a host cell, then penetrates its membranes.



Once it has infiltrated the cell, the virus replicates itself.



A mistake could happen during this release of viral genomes. It is such errors that result in mutated viruses.



"the best way to prevent more variants from emerging is to stop the spread of the virus." It is for this reason that governments, hospitals, and organizations keep the public informed about new variants and update protocols based on their behavior and effects. The concept of "herd immunity" or "population immunity" has also been introduced. This indirect protection from a disease takes advantage of the immunity that a percentage of people have developed through previous diseases and vaccinations to ensure that those who have not developed such are safe and healthy.

Observing social distancing and avoiding mass gatherings are basic protocols that help prevent the spread of the virus as well. In addition to this, vaccines help the immune system fight the virus. After the surge of various COVID-19 variants, the previously implemented procedures are not enough to be a solution. As a result, the importance of abiding by quarantine rules and wearing face masks, among other protocols are further emphasized.

With these in mind, the knowledge on virus mutation aids in the effectiveness of the requirements mentioned. This can be seen in the way the government continues to implement appropriate safety protocols in accordance to the present status of the virus in particular areas of the country, knowing the behavior of viruses and the effects of its replication in the host cell. As a result, there has been and will be less transmission of the virus that decreases COVID-19 cases.

Having a grasp of the scientific phenomenon and the collective actions of the government and citizens builds an understanding as to why certain protocols must be implemented. The background of mutations serves as a guide in deciding what solutions are necessary to combat the virus and enables more people to follow them. All of these contribute to the battle against harmful viruses, such as COVID-19, in the best and safest way possible. ■

IMAGE SOURCES

1. Dzyura, G. (2020). Model of coronavirus [png]. iStockphoto LP. <https://www.istockphoto.com/>
2. Pyron, C. (2022). Zellrätzel [webp]. epuzzle. <https://www.epuzzle.info/>

Infographic by Cassie Gutierrez

To Run or Not to Run:

CANDIDATE SWAPPING FOR THE 2022 ELECTIONS

by Nika Ambal

The capacity for national candidates to rely on a fallback is possible due to the country's substitution law, formally known as the Omnibus Election Code. This allows candidate substitution in cases of death, withdrawal, or disqualification of the original candidate. During circumstances of death or disqualification, the substitute may file their Certificate of Candidacy up to mid-day of election day. However, in instances of withdrawal, the substitute may only file his or her Certificate of Candidacy

within the period fixed by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC).

In the 2016 National Elections, Rodrigo Duterte assumed the presidency under the Partido Demokratikong Pilipino-Laban ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) party. This was done after substituting for Martin Diño, chairman of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, who withdrew his Certificate of Candidacy (COC) as a response to his possible disqualification as a nuisance candidate by the COMELEC legal department. Fast forward to

the upcoming 2022 Elections, a total of 10 candidates for various national posts filed for COCs as substitutes, or individuals who replace an initial candidate's position in a political party.

In October 2021, two vice-presidential aspirants withdrew, leaving their spots open for substitution. Among the candidates who replaced them was Sara Duterte, who withdrew her initial bid for Davao City Mayor and eventually filed a Certificate of Candidacy for the vice presidency in place of Lyle Uy, who was the primary vice

presidential bet of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats. Former vice presidential candidate Raquel Castillo of Partido Lakas ng Masa was also substituted by Walden Bello after submitting a statement of substitution, last October 13, 2021.

Presidential candidate Antonio Valdes was replaced by former anti-communist insurgency task force spokesman Antonio Parlade Jr.

Senator Christopher "Bong" Go withdrew his bid for vice presidency, replacing Gregor

Belgica of Pederalismo ng Dugong Dakilang Samahan (PDDS).

President Rodrigo Duterte also joined the senatorial race after replacing Mona Liza Visorde under PDDS.

Substitution is permitted by law in order to protect political parties whose candidates suddenly drop out of the elections. Last November 9, 2021, COMELEC spokesperson James Jimenez explained in a Twitter post:

When a candidate runs under a political party, that political party has as much at stake in the elections as the individual candidate. If the candidate suddenly drops out of the race, then the pol[itical] party is 'injured.' A remedy is needed to prevent the injury-so, substitution.

The filing for the COCs lasted from October 1 to 8, 2021, with the deadline for substitutions having been set on November 15 of the same year. Within that period, a total of 10 substitutions and 19 withdrawals were submitted to the Commission on Elections for national posts in 2022. ■



Art by Keisha Castillo

THE ICC INVESTIGATES DUTERTE'S “War on Drugs” CAMPAIGN FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

by Anya Legarda

On September 15, 2021, the International Criminal Court opened a formal investigation into President Rodrigo Duterte's “war on drugs” campaign and the human rights violations that allegedly took place under it. In a press briefing the following day, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque stated that:

The president has no reaction because, from the start, he said he would die first before he faces foreign judges...the development that a pre-trial chamber of the ICC has authorized an investigation into alleged crimes committed in our territory neither bothers nor troubles the president and his administration.

This attitude towards the ICC continued during the president's trip to Palawan last November 5, 2021, when he publicly responded to the case by telling the prosecutors to “just drop dead.” Further, on November 10, 2021, the Philippine government responded to the prosecution by filing a deferral request until further notice.

With this, why is the ICC conducting a formal investigation into the “war on drugs” campaign?

The ICC covers four categories of violations of law: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crime of aggression. Presently, President Duterte's “war on drugs” campaign is being labeled as a felony for crimes against humanity for the *thousands of killings* reported to have taken place during his presidential term.

During the former Davao mayor's campaign rally in May 2016 in a crowd of nearly 300,000 civilians, he vowed, “If I make it to the presidential palace, I will do just what I did as mayor. You drug pushers, holdup men, and do-nothings, you better get out because I'll kill you.” Throughout President Duterte's political history, he has freely used derogatory language about fatality and human rights. A few months after he was appointed president, he admitted to personally killing three men, “I killed about three

of them. I don't know how many bullets from my gun went inside their bodies. It happened, and I cannot lie about it.”

A few years later in 2018, President Duterte confessed, “My only sin is the extrajudicial killings.” In response to his remarks, Spokesman Roque said that his figurative language was “playful” and should not be taken seriously. However, his words had previously been responsible for various criminal cases by confirming his participation in several homicides. In 2015, Duterte admitted to having connections with the Davao Death Squad on an *online talk show*. He said, “Am I the death squad? True. That is true.”

Before becoming president, Rodrigo Duterte served as mayor in his hometown, Davao, for seven terms. A scandal broke out in November 2021 when retired police officer Arthur Lascañas disclosed in a televised news conference that he was Duterte's hit-man during his time as mayor. Lascañas admitted to being pronounced as the leader of the Davao Death Squad, a group formed on behalf of Duterte to violently penalize minor-league drug dealers and criminals. The alliance was *responsible for the deaths of political opponents* prior to Duterte's position as president. Lascañas's testimony was

joined by Edgar Matobato, another experienced hit-man hired by Duterte, who has been in hiding ever since he confirmed the death allegations.

Since President Duterte assumed office in 2016, his hard stance on illegal drugs has only continued. Throughout his presidency, his primary focus was his “war on drugs” campaign. The movement was launched in order to take control of the country's substance abuse dilemma. However, its implementation went hand-in-hand with an increase in the mortality rate that has been reported to be as high as *12,000*. At the time of writing, a total of *122 children and thousands of civilians* have been murdered without proof of conviction.

In 2017, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) named three of the largest drug trafficking facilities: the United Bamboo Gang, Hong Kong Triad, and the Sun Yee On. The PDEA chief director Aaron Aquino then claimed that since there had been an increase of shabu (methamphetamine) laboratories offshore, a rise in the intake of illegally traded drugs in many Philippine provinces was reported. President Rodrigo Duterte then publicly announced that one of the major drug suppliers, the United Bamboo Gang, had offered a “franchise” to

the Mindanao terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf. Despite this, there was no legitimate action taken compared to the killings in poverty-stricken areas with this information.

When the ICC first filed for an investigation into the “war on drugs” outrage, their request was declined by the current administration. This was to the anger of many of the victims' families who were left to suffer from collateral distress, longing, and grief without government aid.

Llore Pasco, the mother of two of the campaign's victims, shared her thoughts on the administration's impunity. Translated in English, “Of course, the policemen shoot and shoot and shoot. Because he ordered kill, kill, kill.”

When the ICC finally granted a formal investigation in September 2021, Mrs. Pasco spoke on behalf of the grieving mothers across the nation as she said, “it is really like half of the sun shining upon us.”

President Rodrigo Duterte stated on January 5, 2022's press briefing that he “will never apologize for the deaths.” He apprised, “kill me, jail me—I will never apologize.” ■



Photo retrieved by Dani Nguyen

Disappearing Afghanistan women activists

AND THREATENED AFGHAN WOMEN SOLDIERS

by Tin-tin Quianzon

Last October 20, 2021, prominent activist and economics lecturer Frozan Safi went missing in Afghanistan after months of the Taliban's rise in power. In early November, she was found dead along with three other women in Mazar-e-Sharif. Her body was identified by her sister in a morgue only by her clothes as her face was no longer recognizable and as her engagement rings and her bag had not been on her person. "There were bullet wounds all over, too many to count, on her head, heart, chest, kidneys, and legs," her sister, who is also a doctor, stated. Safi was the first known casualty of a defender of women's rights in the time of the Taliban's ascension to power.

Nilofar Ayoubi, Safi's friend, shared that Safi had been part of the Mazar-e-Sharif group that had been protesting for the restoration and protection of women's rights since the takeover of the Taliban in August 2021. Although the women had been marching peacefully, in some protests, the Taliban fired guns towards the air, lashed protestors with whips and cables, beat them with electric batons, and more. According to Ayoubi, Frozan's deep connections to human and women's rights activists in the country gave her a vague awareness of danger before her disappearance. Ayoubi stated in an interview with ABC:

She had messaged one of our fellow sisters a few days before the incident [saying] she's not feeling safe in WhatsApp... and that she'll be available on Signal. Since the situation was so tense at that time, nobody noticed the absence of

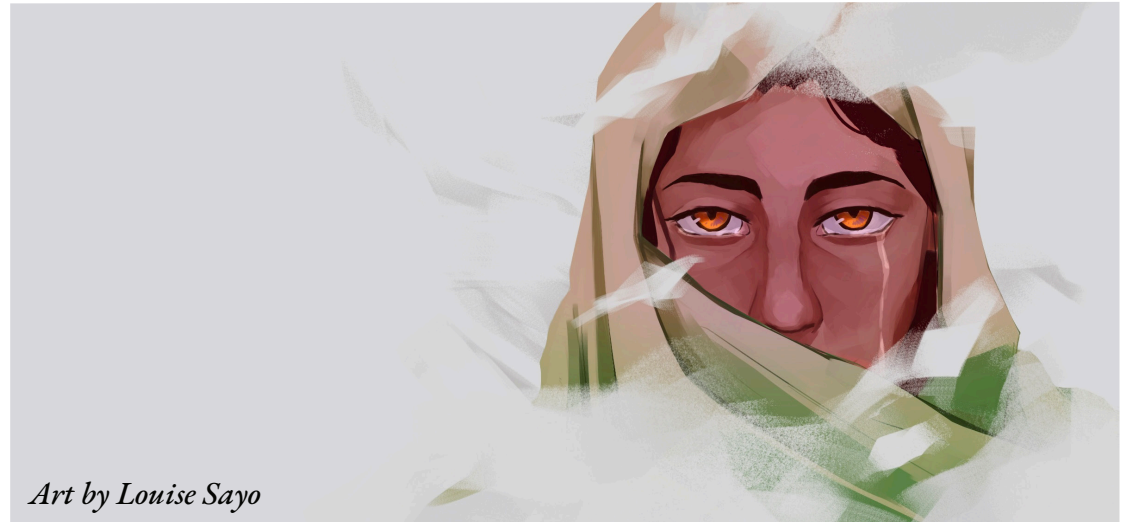
her in the group chat then after a few days, the news came out and her body was found, along with another three activist sisters.

Shortly before her disappearance in October, Safi accepted a call from an unidentified number. She was told to accumulate evidence of service as an activist and to leave for a safe house. Because she thought that her request to go to an asylum in Germany was finally afoot, she actually anticipated this call. Her sister stated that Safi packed important documents such as her university diploma into a bag, donned a white scarf on her head, and left their home.

However, the discovery of her body in a pit nearby the city, along with the bodies of her other two companions, reveals that they were not able to leave the country. During the murder investigations, two suspects had reportedly admitted to beguiling Safi and the three other women to the place where their bodies had been found. A spokesperson of the Taliban has reassured that the two suspects have already been arrested and given to a court.

Ayoubi shared that Frozan's slaughter is a warning to all of the women in Afghanistan: "With this assassination, I think the Taliban succeeded in creating the fear and horror in the families to stop their women, girls, daughters, wives protesting." She was not only devastated but fearful that Frozan's murder will snuff out the spirits of those fighting for women's rights, eventually leading to all their voices being silenced.

At the time of her disappearance, phone calls, messages, and emails sent to other female activists were



Art by Louise Sayo

also discovered. The sender of these alleged that they could help the women leave Afghanistan if they wished. However, not only were the recipients suspiciously required to give personal information about themselves but also they were requested to appear at particular locations.

Additionally, Ayoubi shared that the Taliban fighters have acquired a list of all the women who have participated in a protest. She recalled that the group gathered all the women together, read each and every one of their names, and threatened them by saying that they would be hunted down.

Another unnamed woman, who had aided in the efforts to plan multiple protests, said that she had even been outright menaced by the group. "They said they will kill me and my family if I continue," she told ABC. As of November 2021, they have all gone into hiding, a subsequent effect of the Taliban's return to power.

Aside from female activists, former female Afghan soldiers who had served in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), have also been threatened by the Taliban. Not only are these women threatened by their former life as soldiers

but also oppressed by the constraints placed upon them due to their gender.

Despite burying her uniform in her courtyard as a means to conceal her past in the military, Samima, a former female member of the Afghanistan Air Force, was still called by the Taliban. Out of fear and trepidation, she not only turned off her phone and divested it of its sim card but also bolted away from her own home. Despite that, gunmen of the Taliban still visited her parents in order to inquire about people who previously served in the military. "Thousands of girls like me are receiving threats, face an uncertain future, and are being tracked by the Taliban." Samima shared from a single room flat with a lack of resources for heating and even food.

"I fear that they (the Taliban) might find me and kill me," Jamila, another former female soldier who did not wish for her real name to be used, said. This is due to her distrust of the Taliban. In spite of the group's pledges of general amnesty, the Human Rights Watch and the United Nations alleged that the Taliban have carried out summary killings of over a hundred Afghan security officials. As a result of this, many former female soldiers are constantly changing their

locations in order to evade identification.

In Mazar, as well as in other Afghan cities, a former resident has heard of numerous targeted murders that have even increased but have not been reported. Out of fear, women have stopped organizing and participating in protests wherein they voice out their desire for their hard-won rights.

As reported by CNN last December 4, 2021, the Taliban broadcasted a decree on the rights of women. In this mandate, rules regarding marriage were clearly stated. The declaration articulated that women cannot be obliged to accept a marriage proposal, and it also stated that widows are supposed to have a proportion of their husbands' property. However, there was no mention of women attending school or having work, which was received by Afghan women as evidence of the Taliban's indifference to their basic freedoms.

The sacrifices made and the struggles endured by Afghan women in order to accrue a better life for themselves and regain their merited rights were rescinded by the Taliban people. Until now, their present and their future remain volatile and murky. ■

SWEDEN ELECTS FIRST-EVER Female Prime Minister

by Sasha Rocha

November 30, 2021 marked yet another point on the timeline of Sweden's nearly 500-year history when Magdalena Andersson was elected as the country's first-ever female Prime Minister. This momentous occasion was years in the making, as Sweden was the last of the Scandinavian countries to ever elect a woman as prime minister. However, her journey to the top has been unorthodox and controversial, to say the least.

On November 10, when the previous Prime Minister Stefan Lofven resigned, his party (the Social Democrats) selected Magdalena Andersson to take over as party leader early in November. However, in order to actually step into office, Andersson would need parliamentary support. Sweden's political system dictates that she would not need the majority to

vote her in, but rather she would need the majority to *not* vote against her becoming Prime Minister.

After getting through by one vote on November 24, her election did not convince parliament to give her the crucial budget she requested. They "could not support a budget from a government which is moving far to the left," said the agrarian, libertarian Centre Party leader Annie Loof, and instead opted to pass a proposal from right-wing parties. The Centre Party mainly advocates for climate change prevention, gender equality, and political decentralization.

This caused disarray among the Green Party, whose main advocacies include nonviolence, ecological wisdom, social justice, and participatory democracy. They ended up quitting the coalition government due to this decision. Eventually, Andersson requested to

step down from her post as prime minister after only seven hours in office, saying that she "does not want to lead a government whose legitimacy will be questioned."

She was eventually reappointed as Prime Minister on November 30 after the votes from members of parliament stayed the same from the week prior. With her new position, the Social Democrats promised to "break the segregation and push back the violence, create the green jobs of the future by leading the way in climate change and regaining control of welfare."

Though Andersson is Sweden's first female Prime Minister, she has years of political experience under her belt. She started as a political adviser for then Prime Minister Goran Persson in 1996 and then climbed the ranks to become Persson's director of planning from

1998 to 2004. After, she became state secretary for the Ministry of Finance from 2004 to 2006, was the domestic policy adviser for Social Democrat leader Mona Sahlin from 2007 to 2009, and then became the deputy director-general of the Swedish Tax Agency from 2009 to 2012. 2012 to 2014 marked the years she was the economy policy spokesperson for the same party, and in late 2014 she became the minister of finance for then-Prime Minister Stefan Lofven all the way until 2021. During her years under Lofven's government, Sweden's GDP increased by over 2% annually and unemployment rates went down from 7.9% in 2014 to 6.3% by April 2018.

Despite her dizzying rise to power, she has high hopes for the future, saying, "I don't see this as the start of 10 months, I see this as the start of 10 years." ■



Photo retrieved from Bloomberg

Even better the second time around:

WOODROSE HOLDS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL ONLINE INTRAMS

by Isabel Peralta

School and team spirit graced the Woodrose community once again during the second virtual Intrams held last November 12, 2021. The much-anticipated event was kicked off with festivities designed to be even better than last year's.

Preparations for Intrams had begun as early as the summer prior to the start of the school year. For the first time ever, this staple of Woodrose events transpired with a theme—Into The Multiverse—a notion that is symbolic of the coalition of the four teams as they emerge into a new era of Intrams revelry. In accordance with the newly established theme, the four teams took on new emblems as the Blue Tron, the Golden Time Keepers, the Green Guardians, and the Red Yakshas.

The crew of people behind this year's Intrams banded in an effort to bring back many aspects of face-to-face Intrams and modify them to adapt to the online setting. As such, the 2021 opening experience saw the return of

team relays and the sight of on-campus promotional videos featuring the four team captains and their respective co-captains. These included the Flag Race and Torch Lighting. And it didn't end there. The Parade of Colors was a virtual manifestation of the familiar Woodrose team unity amidst the distance. Highly involved in the execution of this process was a team of editors that compiled a collection of videos from team members.

The fight for first place began with the team dances. Stakes were high in that these were judged by professional dance coaches. Countless members of the Woodrose community got to enjoy the dances as well as they watched, reacted, and shared their team's videos online. Soon thereafter, the Blue Team triumphed. Nonetheless, Gold team Mommy, Janna La O' said, "I feel as though we dance for the fun of it. The dance being judged makes exerting more effort a given but the nerves die down since we work as a team, since we work together." Later in the day, competition intensified as students went head to head with one another in the Multiverse Kahoot tournament,

which covered a variety of topics from Disney to random trivia to pop culture to Marvel.

But of course, what would intrams be without tug of war? The virtual tug of war entailed the collection of videos from team members doing the game from their homes. The winning team would then be determined by the most video submissions. For this particular game, the Red Team emerged victorious for the intermediate division, while the Gold Team dominated the high school tournament.

Another scene from the day was the wide array of performers coming from across the student body, and from the faculty. As similarly heartwarming for many was the opportunity to share the joy with the beneficiaries of Save the Children Philippines, this year's official Intrams beneficiary. A donation to the organization brings about the chance to provide Filipino children with meals. The opportunity to contribute to the greater success of the project continues as donation channels will remain open until

Family Day.

After a jam-packed day of friendly rivalry and bonding, students gathered for the closing ceremony, where winners of the games and giveaways were announced.

When asked about how the Intrams spirit continues to burn bright despite tackling it in what still seems to be unfamiliar territory, Gold Team Captain, Sofia Gonzalez said, "Though the activities we prepare do not duplicate what we normally do during Intrams, the fact that we are able to spend time with our team and showcase our team spirit allows online Intrams to be successful."

While this year's season had been a blast for many, students can't help but feel a longing for the return of face-to-face Intrams. However, "We have to go on with [Intrams.] The year's just not complete without it," says Erika, a senior high school student. And for many members of the Woodrose community, nothing could ever ring more true. ■



EDITORIAL & OPINION

True Women: FROM FICTION TO REALITY

“You got into Harvard Law?”

“What? Like, it’s hard?”

- *Legally Blonde* -

People cannot be boxed. Everyone is a complex character that, no matter how much we interact with them, will always surprise us. This may be because we have an initial image of them formed by what we know of them, their circumstances, chance encounters, or decisions. Such complexity makes it hard to tackle a person or character from reality to fiction. It is like attempting to portray a woman via her caricature.

While there are many successful, well-loved, and well-rounded stories with characters such as Elle Woods from “Legally Blonde” breaking “tropes” and predictable class acts, it is impossible for every aspect of a character to be covered in a given number of words or minutes. What is featured usually are only essential to the audience’s understanding of the person, whether this be looks, intellect, family background, culture, or even religious beliefs.

These traits that define the individuals become associated with their actions and perspectives, as well as the treatment they receive from society. After watching numerous characters of a particular group portrayed in the same way, *audiences may transfer this perception to real life*. When it comes to TV shows and movies with *realistic acting*, *people may also struggle with differentiating actors from the roles they play*.

With these changed perceptions of reality influencing actions, stereotypical and extreme portrayals of people, such as women, can do harm to society. How a woman relates to society, and how society relates to her can be negatively impacted.

For example, a “Cinderella” from the 1950 Disney movie, when placed in real life, is a helpless woman trapped in her oppressive circumstances. The people around her do not expect her to fight back, and she does not do so until she is saved by her “prince charming.”

On the other hand, a real-life “Captain Marvel” from the 2019 movie would find herself treating those around her brashly. She uses her mind-blowing skills to force her way through life.

Now, the issue with the prevalence of these types of personas is that it limits the kind of female characters often present in fiction to two extremes. One being the more traditional portrayal of women, a girl who has more of a pure and submissive temperament. And the other being the femme fatale we see today; the “lone wolf” who simply needs no man, or frankly anyone by her side. However, these two depictions fail to accurately represent the depth of character as well as the varying personalities women have. We are not just two ends of a spectrum. We are living, breathing human beings whose complexities leave so much to be critiqued but also admired. Therefore, it makes no sense to restrict the female personifications presented in mainstream fiction to only these two tropes.

Adding on to this dilemma, such characterizations also affect how people treat themselves and others. This is as individuals, and in this context women usually look up to fictional characters as role models, making efforts to emulate their personality or other traits. Young girls are even more impressionable to the influence of these representations found in various media. And with the prominence of these two stereotypes, she is often left to pick between being an individual in her own right or receiving the warmth and affection each person deserves. According to fiction, should she choose the latter, she risks being reduced to a mere supporting character whose primary purpose is to fuel her male counterpart’s character development.

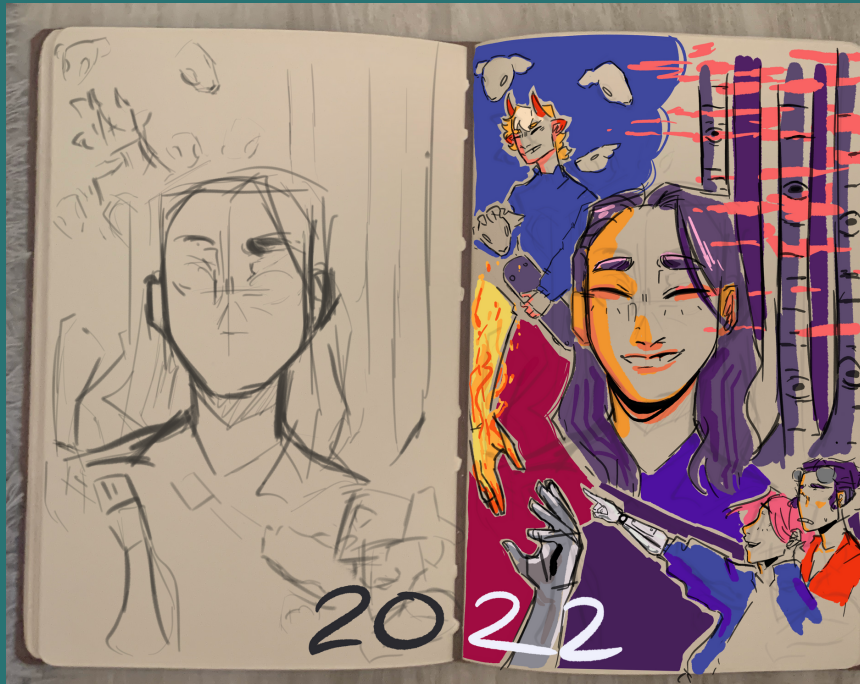
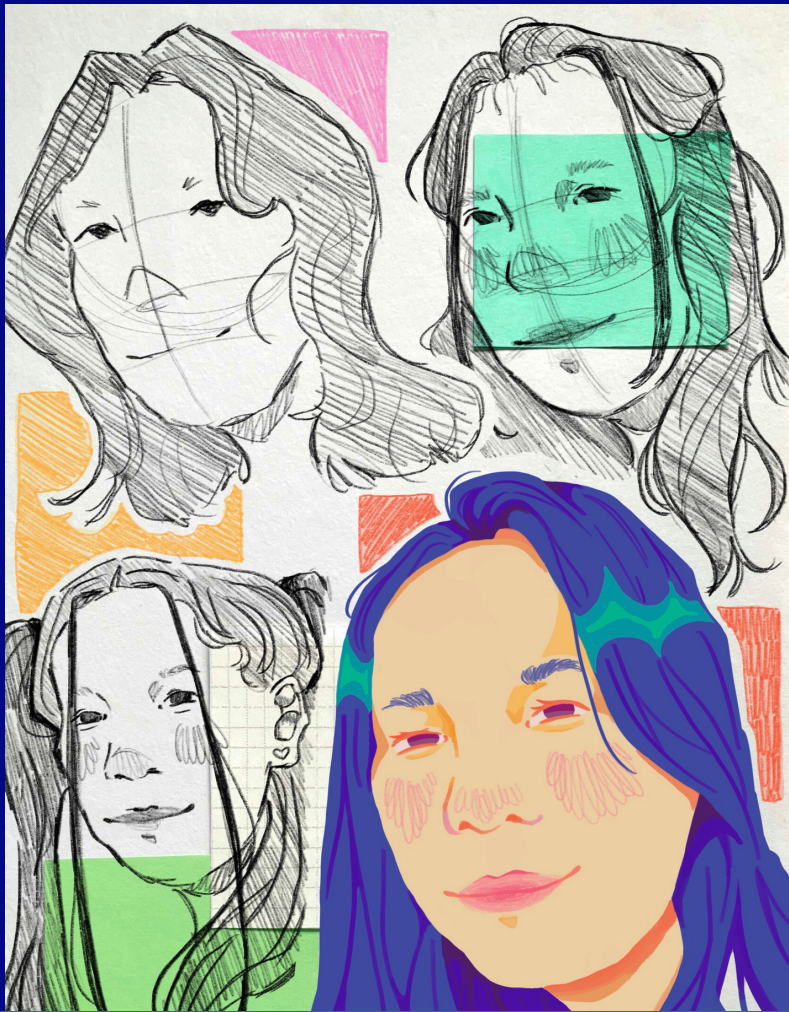
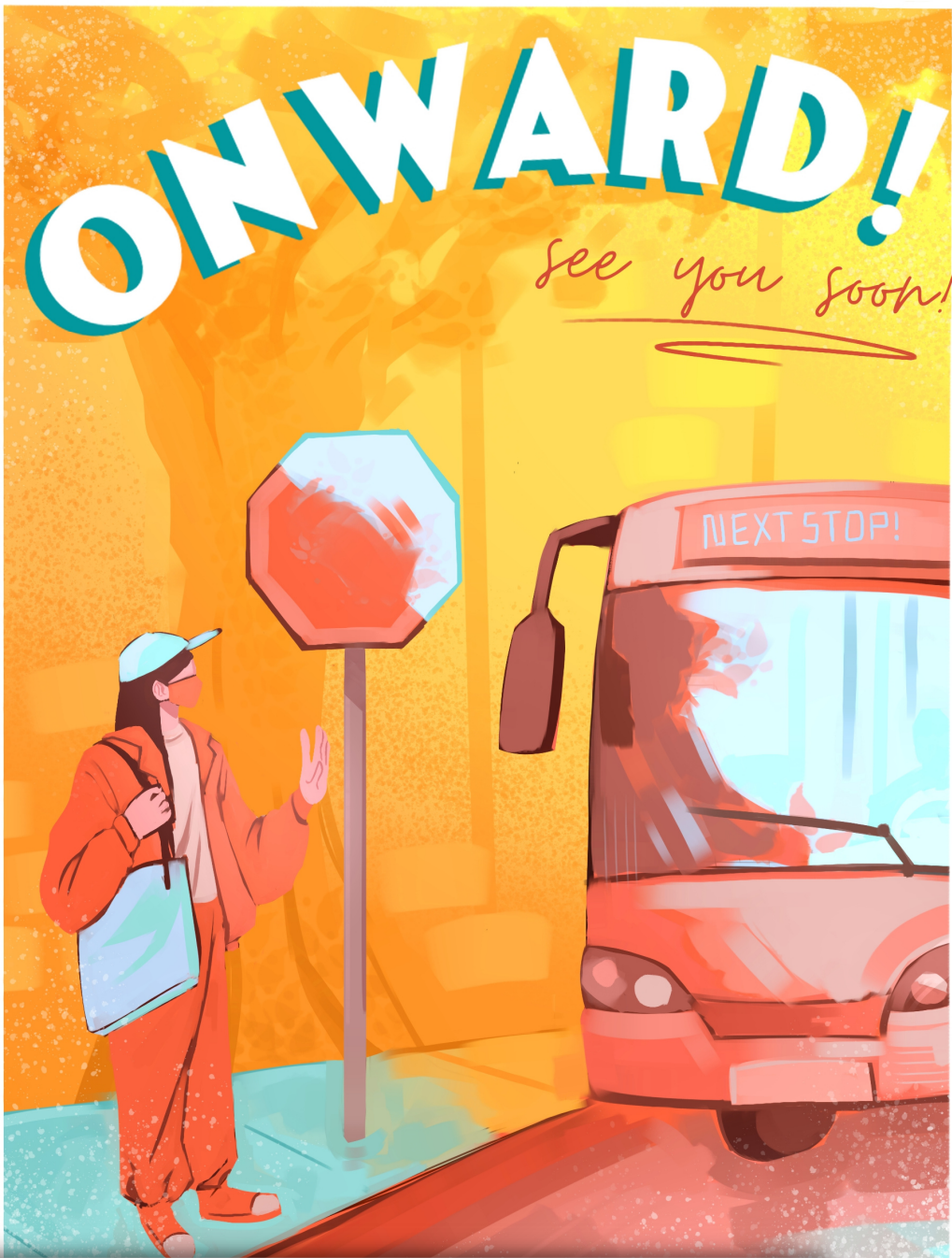
However, these consequences are not unique to women alone as they may also affect the way that men view and treat the women around them. Seeing this largely binary depiction of women prevents them from obtaining an authentic sense of what women are actually like, consequently creating defective expectations. This in turn also influences the relationships they form with them, regardless of whether they are romantic or not. And while it can be argued that men can get a better picture of what women are like through real-life interactions, oftentimes, they are first exposed to these portrayals in fiction before they are able to form relationships with women outside of their family circle.

This should not be the case. Women should not be forced to choose between being loved and retaining their own independence. They

should not have to feel that falling in love, wanting to be loved, diminishes their own strength and capabilities. And ultimately, they should not have to force themselves to align with either of these supposed “extremities.”

We have come a long way in this fight for gender equality, from dismantling the notion that men must be rough in order to be strong and allowing them to freely express their feelings to being able to acknowledge that women are made for far more than just love and letting them pursue their passions. However, it would be a grave mistake to begin to propagate the idea that in order for a woman to be strong, she must be stoic and emotionally tone deaf. If we truly wish to achieve the equality we have long sought for, it is vital that we recognize that both love and independence are absolute necessities for each and every person. And the characters found in the stories we use to move and inspire these people must reflect this very reality. ■

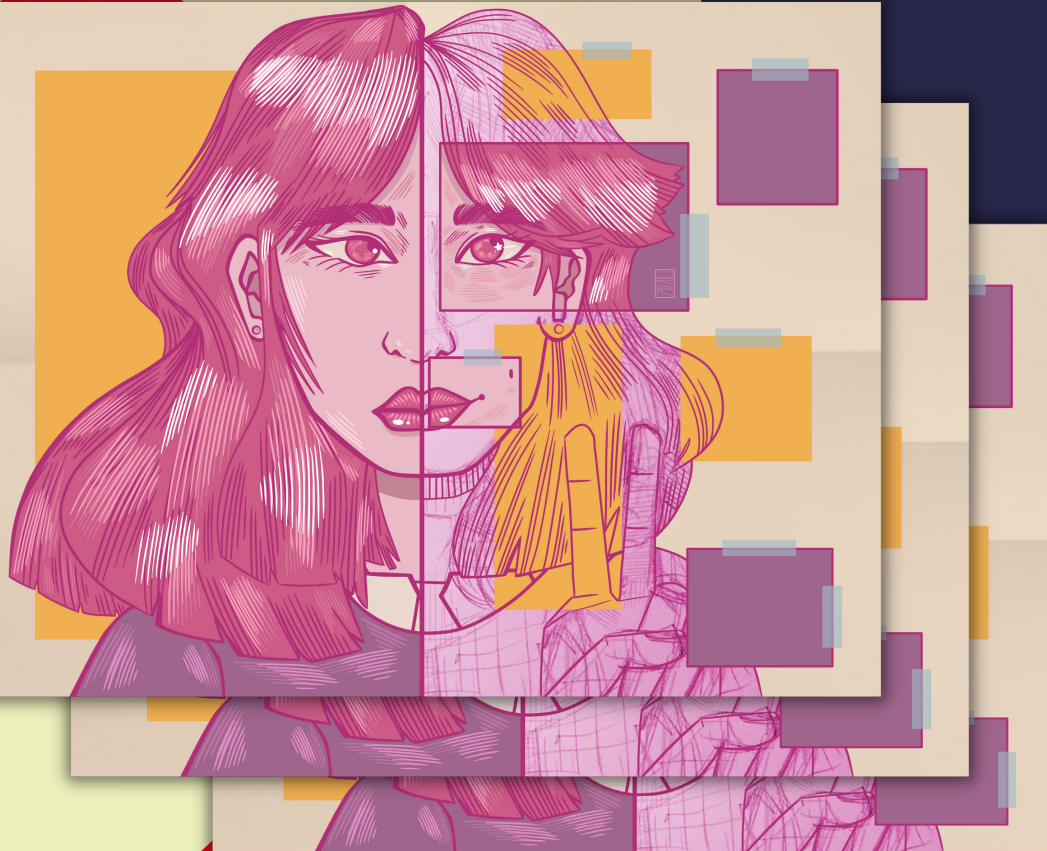


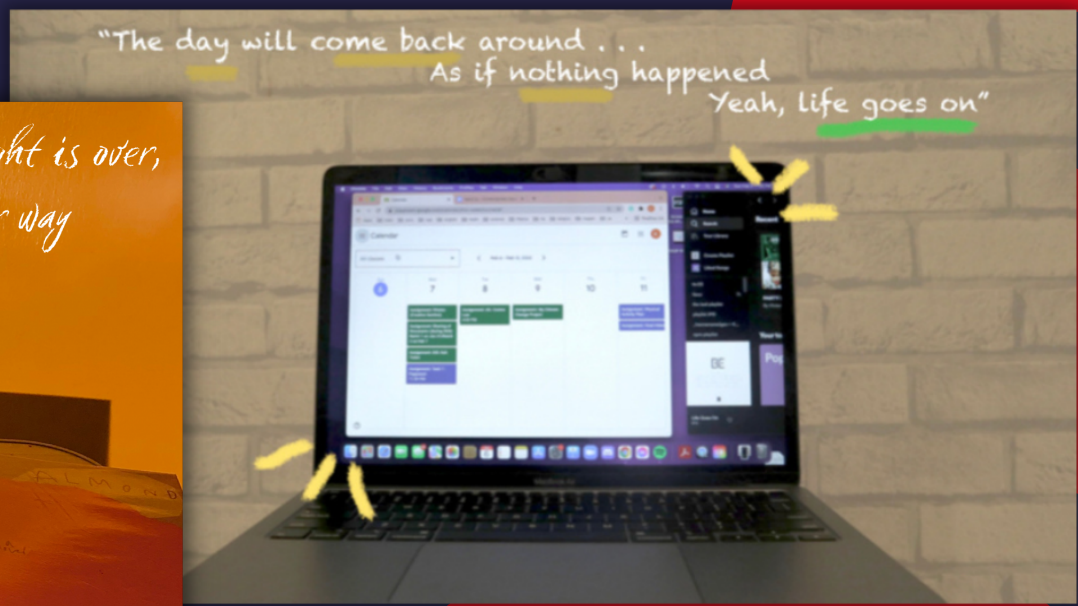
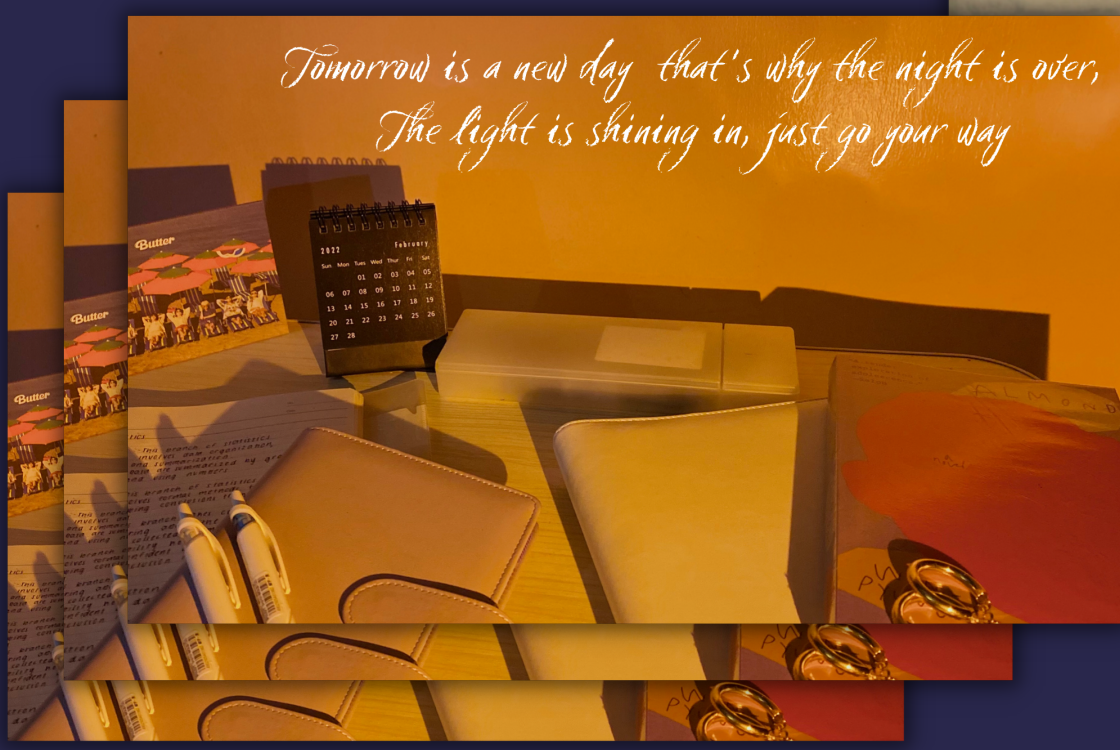
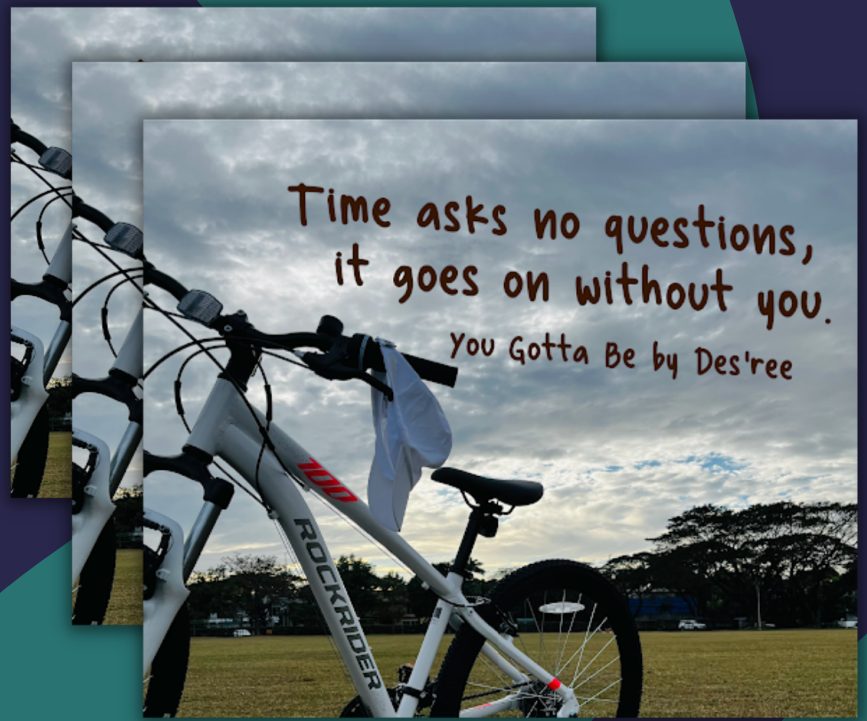


LET'S MEET AGAIN



Gaby





WHY WE NEED TO Educate the Youth on Mental Illness

With the curtains drawn and the lights dimmed, mental health is spoken with hushed tones. Such is the picture of psychological matters in the Philippines. A palpable tension forms in the room at the mention of one's mental health problems. In general, psychology and mental health are not as valued in traditional Filipino culture.

A 2020 study says that many Filipinos around the world are reluctant to seek mental healthcare. Besides the inaccessibility of resources, some reasons as to why Filipinos do not prioritize mental healthcare are due to self and social stigmas. These include beliefs that one's mental condition will "ruin the family reputation" and is "the fault of one's character." Many Filipinos are affected by such judgements, with mental illness being the "third most common disability in the Philippines" according to 2017 data from the World Health Organization.

It is needless to say that such views are harmful to the millions of individuals with mental health conditions, but why are they so prevalent in the first place? As Ross Tugade wrote for CNN Philippines while reflecting on personal experience, the Filipino culture's emphasis on "resilience and humor amidst pain and personal suffering makes it all the more difficult to talk about mental illness out in the open." Recent years have seen a general increase in both awareness and compassion towards mental health, but social media posts and wellbeing seminars can only go so far. Undeniably, the stigma surrounding mental health remains.

There is a need for mental health education to start at an age before harmful stereotypes form; it needs to start in schools. Integrating mental health into the school curriculum is a step towards creating a culture that promotes openness and acceptance.

Education = Understanding

Media can tend to portray people experiencing mental illness as "violent" or "hostile." It is heard in how a number of Filipinos casually refer to them as "abnoy" or "baliw." Children are most commonly surrounded by their older relatives, like their parents,

titas and titos, parents' friends, etc. Although the notion that those with mental illness need to be kept away is largely outdated, the mindset of many children and pre-teens is based on previous exposure. This is why it is important for kids and teens to learn about mental illness from many different perspectives, especially in a space wherein they are present almost every day. Educating students on mental illness, whether it be through talks with professionals and those experiencing mental illness or carefully curated curriculums, could allow them to form a better understanding of the topic and different experiences.

If kids understand the common triggers and traits of a mental illness, then they'll be less defensive to them. Because most of the time, they don't need to be. Those experiencing mental illness, like fellow classmates, are regular human beings. The difference is that in our current society, they need to put much more effort to get people to understand them. A lot of the time, they don't get the chance to stand up for themselves because they might be scared, or because their classmates' perceptions of them are out of their control. They already feel that they are seen as less than, and maybe they are treated as such.

A lot of kids know the common goals of school: to thrive academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. But mental and emotional obstacles can make these goals more difficult to reach for many of them. Maybe a learning disability makes them slower to understand certain concepts, or social anxiety makes them afraid to closely interact with others. If all kids understand this, it could create more compassion in them for other people. Teaching them about mental health in-depth can also mean teaching them how to support the people they will meet throughout their lives who may struggle. Even if they are silent, at the very least they would not treat their classmates' personal struggles as an alien concept.

Accepting Experiences

From the same CNN article mentioned earlier, Tugade writes:

I was a freshman in college

when I was first confronted with serious problems regarding my mental health. I was sixteen then, freshly uprooted from the province to study in Manila. And while I could have easily ascribed my sadness to homesickness, the results of my university-required guidance tests showed otherwise. They painted a picture of depression and other various symptoms. For the first time, I understood that all that raw, uncontrollable sadness and rage that sprang from within me was not because of some normal personality flaw.

This is a description of the author's personal discovery: their personal struggles were not just the fault of their actions or personality but were instead due to a real, valid mental health issue. This story is just one of many and shows the difference that knowledge can make. Awareness and understanding of one's own experiences can be life-changing, or at the very least, it can mean progress.

Nowadays, those who seek more information about mental health approach the Internet and go down the rabbit hole of a million sources, rather than seeking a professional. But these sources alone are not sufficient in raising a person, especially if one's

access to the internet is limited. Encouraging mental health education and conversation in schools could help people feel seen and heard from those who can support them the most like parents, teachers, mentors, and guidance counselors.

With the current climate surrounding mental health in the Philippines, it is admittedly a topic that may be difficult to introduce to school curriculums. Several parents might object and say that the topic is "too heavy" to discuss. However, why isn't the same said about physical illnesses and natural disasters? Both are topics discussed in schools in order to prepare their students for the future; as one of the most common diseases in the country and in the world today, why is mental health not given the same priority?

It's tough to open up about mental health experiences, and there will never be simple solutions. At the very least, education and awareness allow one to accept themselves when they feel that no one does. At the very least, kids can have more compassion and understanding for each other when things get tough. It's time to break the silence surrounding mental health. It's time to turn on the lights, pull the curtains back, and listen, with a very open heart. ■



Body Neutrality:

A REALISTIC REFORM OF BODY POSITIVITY'S IDEALS

by Hanna Marasigan

From the advertisements with models of diverse body types to the infographics shared on social media, much of the content we are exposed to nowadays are curated under the principles of the body positivity movement. It aims to promote all body types as beautiful so individuals may learn to fall in love with their own. It sounds ideal, right? But is it possible? For many, the answer is no, and from this reluctance came the body neutrality movement.

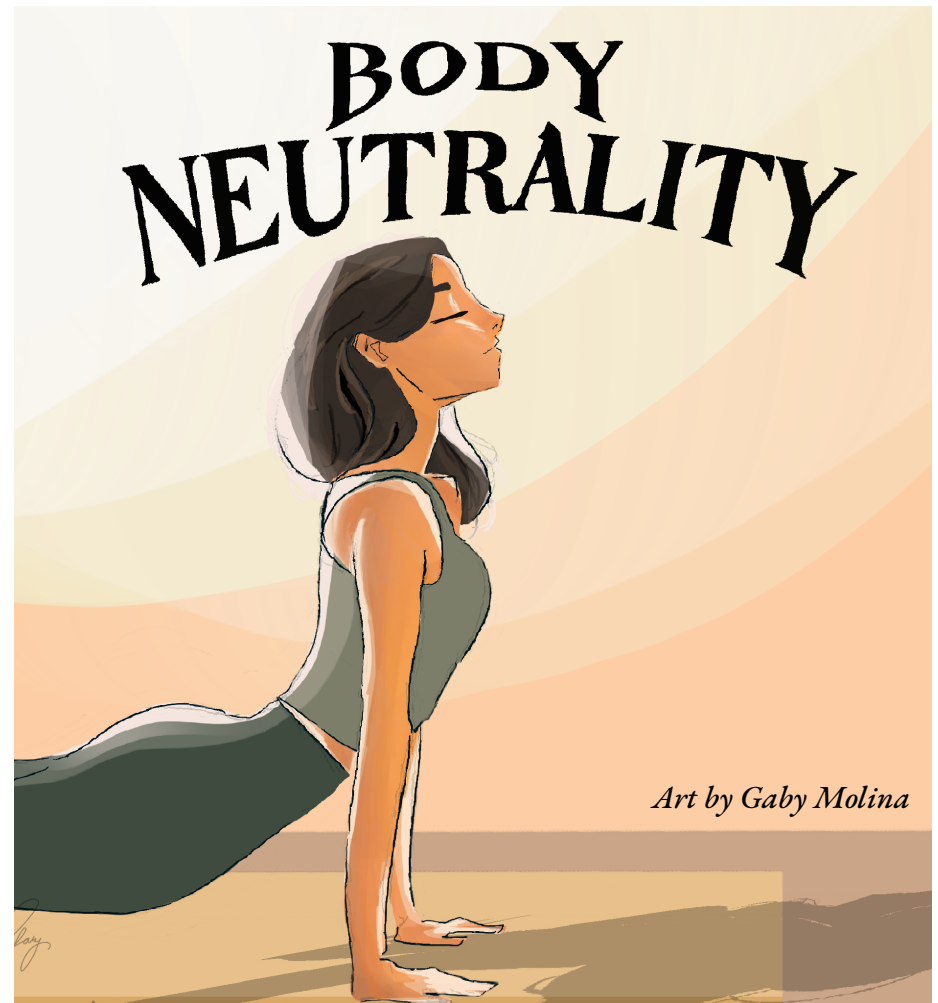
Before delving into what body neutrality has to offer, it's important to first understand the flaws of its predecessor, the body positivity movement. The notions of self-love and acceptance come off as wonderful things to aim for, but the reality is that there are a great number of factors in our society that make this mindset seem out of reach. Elizabeth Wassenaar, the regional medical director of the Denver Eating Recovery Center, points out additional factors that may hinder others from achieving body positivity: "For some people, getting to body positivity feels like too much of a challenge for any number of reasons, including history of trauma, internalizing weight stigma, and/or feeling restricted because of their body's limitations." The already existing beauty standards further add to this struggle. The body positivity movement attempts to broaden these standards, but considering how ingrained they seem to be, the attempt often feels idealistic.

Even so, there's still the perspective that the intention to love your body is purposeful in and of itself. That may be true for many, but that purpose may also take a turn for the worse. While the movement's original objective of self-love towards our bodies is commendable, it still puts great emphasis on the physical being of people. It carries the slight connotation that we must convince ourselves we are beautiful in order to feel of value. This can be difficult, especially since our bodies constantly change with our age and experiences. Instead of constantly modifying your mindset to see everything as beautiful, why not take away your personal attention from the physical being of people as a whole?

The focus on the physicality of people is something we may unconsciously develop and we may be surprised at its existence. It can be manipulated into the extremes, and when this happens, the body positivity movement can become anti-self-improvement. A number of people who partake in the movement interpret it as loving every single part of your body the way it is. Therefore, they tend to see practices that change how your body looks as a sign that you don't accept it. This includes activities such as working out, dieting, shaving, and even the use of makeup. Believe it or not, people have been condemned for doing these things. Celebrities like Adele, Rebel Wilson, and Lizzo were shamed by the public for losing a significant amount of weight. They were accused of condoning and promoting toxic beauty standards. However, the celebrities have clarified that it was done of their own accord and health reasons.

The very core of body positivity aims for inclusivity, but it sadly doesn't translate as such. It tries to change what being beautiful means, but still overshadows certain groups. Those who are on the skinnier side of the spectrum are made to feel as though they are not allowed to have insecurities, because to others, they are the beauty standard. Those with bigger body types are questioned and accused of encouraging others to be ignorant of their personal health. It doesn't help that companies tend to capitalize on the movement to appear socially aware. This undertaking further spotlights things that should be normalized, which ruins the whole point. In the end, it seems as if nobody wins.

But what if nobody has to win? What if you didn't have to completely fall in love with your body in order to peacefully coexist with it? These are the questions the body neutrality movement is rooted in. It aims to shift the focus from what your body looks like to what your body can do. It pulls you away from negative thinking without pushing you to think positively about your body. In this way, you can slowly strip away the power that your physical appearance has on you instead of conditioning yourself to adore it all the time. It is still very much possible to reach



Art by Gaby Molina

the acceptance the body positivity movement is targeted for, but with this different approach.

Through the body neutrality movement, you can recognize that you are more than what you look like. Ultimately, your value lies in your identity, so this should be the priority. The movement points out the value of honing your personality through finding hobbies you enjoy and seeking experiences for the good of your mind and body. This does not take away from caring for our bodies, however. We are simply encouraged to recognize that we are 'multifaceted beings', as said in an article by Iris Goldshtajn of Shape Magazine.

These ideals can actually feel much more personal since they do not try to transform existing concepts of society. There is then a safer space created, where self-improvement and self-acceptance can co-exist. You can work out, try a diet, or experiment with make-up as long as it feels like something that is beneficial to you as a human being. With this newfound attitude, you are given an opportunity to free yourself from making decisions based on the desire to look perfect.

This mindset can be established in

your life in a number of ways. When conversing with others, divert the conversation when it becomes heavily rooted in people's physical appearance. If you want to compliment someone, it's of course a good thing to tell them when they look nice, but make sure to compliment who they are as well. Don't restrict yourself from eating certain foods — it's all about portion control. When looking for a physical activity to do, pick something you know is fun for you! It should feel like leisure, not torture.

The dynamic between oneself and body is different for each person, so take what you learn as your own. Body neutrality is just another option set out for you. You can still ground yourself within the body positivity movement if that's what works for you, as long as you are able to recognize when it gets toxic. It's all about the perspectives you take in for yourself and not going into the extremes. What's most important is strengthening your ability to recognize your self-worth, in whichever way you'd like. ■

Shang-Chi and the Ten Rings:

ELIMINATING STEREOTYPES WITH PROPER REPRESENTATION

by Nika Ambal

As you decide to watch a blockbuster film on your device, you count on your favorite Hollywood actors to be there. Usually, you have seen them portray the same roles in different movies. These roles usually try to portray lives and values that we can see in everyday life. We sometimes identify ourselves with the on-screen characters' personalities and dialogue. To retain quality in acting, it is important that the casted actors must be fitting to their background description and deliver their speaking lines convincingly. But did you know that among all characters who have significant lines in movies, Asian and Pacific Islanders only make up 6 percent of speaking roles and less than 4 percent of leads and co-leads in Hollywood films (Rahman, 2021)? This highlights the major issue of underrepresentation, even if Asians are now the fastest-growing single-race racial and ethnic group in the United States (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). For the longest time, Asian Characters were always misrepresented and characterized under stereotypes in several Hollywood films. From caucasian actors portraying Asians to Hollywood's yellowface practice, Asians were treated as second-class

citizens out of ignorance and disrespect.

The earliest depiction of yellowface, the practice of wearing makeup to imitate the appearance of an East Asian person, was seen in the 1937 film adaptation of Pearl S. Buck's novel, *The Good Earth*. Instead of accurately casting a Chinese woman for the role of O-Lan, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios gave the role to German actress Luise Rainer. Another recent incident of misguided casting was in the film *Aloha* (2014), where the role for Allison Ng was given to Emma Stone, even when the description for Allison's character was supposed to be a quarter-Hawaiian, quarter-Chinese woman. And while Hollywood has improved on the accuracy in casting Asian actors for Asian roles, various films have also boxed Asians in with stereotypes such as having exaggerated accents, or as Kung Fu masters and killers (Rajgopal, 2010). According to an accompanying analysis from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 35% of their Asian characters embody at least one common trope or stereotype, such as "Martial Artist" or "Model Minority" (Yee, 2021). An example of this stereotype was seen in the movie *Sixteen Candles* (1984) where the character of Long

Duk Dong is portrayed as a foreign, Asian exchange student that speaks in a farfetched manner for comedic purposes.

However, with the realization that stereotypes are more offensive than comedic, recent movies are straying away from the formulaic way of portraying Asians. The 2021 Marvel Film *Shang-Chi and the Seven Rings* prove otherwise that Asian stereotypes are not needed to make a box-office hit. *Shang-Chi's* superhero origin story is seen under the lens of Chinese culture, a refreshing narrative approach compared to the previous origin stories of white superheroes. Firstly, the film features different disciplines of Chinese martial arts such as Shaolin, Tai Chi, Bajiquan, Wing Chun, Hung ga, Baquazhang, along with the use of Chinese weaponry. The authenticity of fighting sequences was made possible under the direction of stunt veterans Peng Zhang and Guillermo Grispo, former Jackie Chan Stunt Team member Andy Cheng, and the late Brad Allan who served as a second-unit director and supervising stunt coordinator (Screen Rant, 2021). Aside from Chinese martial arts, the film illustrates Chinese mythological characters towards the final act, showing different fairy tale creatures such as the pixiu, dijiang, and longma. Of course, the representation of Chinese culture also extends to the use of the Mandarin language throughout the film.

"The idea is that [Shang-Chi and Xu Xialing's father, Wenwu] can speak any language he wants, and he teaches his kids multiple languages. So we have scenes that imply; that they are able to switch between English and Chinese," said writer-director Destin Daniel Cretton in an interview with Polygon. For the non-Mandarin speakers, the production's translator and Mandarin dialect coach, Nova Zheng, translates the Chinese dialogue for subtitles.

Finally, the film focuses on family and tradition, both integral parts of Chinese culture. While *Shang-Chi's* father Wenwu was initially unable to express his love for his children and struggles with his unhealthy dependence on the ten powerful rings, his redemption arc was revealed towards the final act, when he sacrificed himself to the Dweller to

save *Shang-Chi* as well as give him the ten rings to defeat the villain. These selfless acts were his way of making up for his shortcomings as a father.

Wenwu's questionable parenting still had a reason behind it. Although he had used pervasive techniques on *Shang Chi's* martial arts training and disregarded guiding Xu Xialing, "At the end of the day, (Wenwu) didn't know how to express love like his wife did... But he thought, if I give them power, that's my expression of love. That means I care for you. Look at the empire I've built for you...It reflects a lot on the Asian culture whereby they leave their children a legacy. 'I will work for it, then I will hand it to you. See, I gave you so much.' And we're like, 'I don't need this, I would prefer you give me your time,'" explained Michelle Yeoh in an interview with USA Today, who played *Shang-Chi's* aunt, Ying Nan.

Shang-Chi and the Ten Rings has brought a lot of firsts in the Marvel Cinematic Universe: Marvel's first Asian superhero, first Marvel movie featuring an all-Asian cast, first martial arts movie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, first Marvel movie to feature a heavy dose of Mandarin (Catchplay+, 2021), and the first-ever film to surpass \$200 million domestically since the start of the pandemic (Aquilina, 2021). With its success, there are hopes that this movie would shed light on the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes in the US. The negative depiction of Asians in movies is believed to have played a part in the spread of anti-Asian misinformation related to the pandemic. "There's a massive problem with the representation and portrayal of East and South-East Asians, in turn creating a dehumanization [of them] which we've seen [come to the fore] in the last year," says British-East Asian actor and writer, York Loh. "We're not portrayed well and that leads to a certain kind of racism being enabled."

A single movie cannot change the film industry's past faulty attempts in representation. However, with the creation of Asian characters that exhibit heroism and empathy, just as seen in *Shang-Chi and the Ten Rings*, there is hope that the next generation of filmmakers will be able to fully establish the roles of Asians in cinema.



Photo retrieved from Marvel Cinematic Universe Wiki

Decoding the Tech World

by Carina Gutierrez

We all know the scene. The hacker sits at his desk, furiously typing into his keyboard. A clump of wires plugged into the computer. Will he bridge the firewall?

Programming is popularly characterized by elaborate jargon, black screens, and complicated numbers. However, as the language of codes and computer science is becoming increasingly more accessible, students are discovering that they themselves are capable of learning and mastering the basics of the codes that make up so much of our everyday lives. “Coding is the language of a computer,” explains Ms. Pablo, who teaches coding for the Woodrose Senior High. “Through coding, you understand how to communicate with one.”

Woodrose offers the topic of coding to the ABM, GAS, and HUMSS strands aside from just STEM, which is where coding would typically play a larger role in. This is in view of the fact that it is not a skill limited only to those in the science and technology industry. Ms. Pablo is a firm believer in this.

I really think that everyone should have a background in coding because it helps you think in the way that a computer would. All the things that coding has produced has made our lives more efficient, like for example, Facebook, that was created by a programmer, AinBNB, Grab; these all changed the way we live.

Empowerment Technologies, which includes coding and programming was recently introduced into the highschool curriculum, but Ms. Pablo believes that the subject should be introduced to students as early as elementary school. “The more

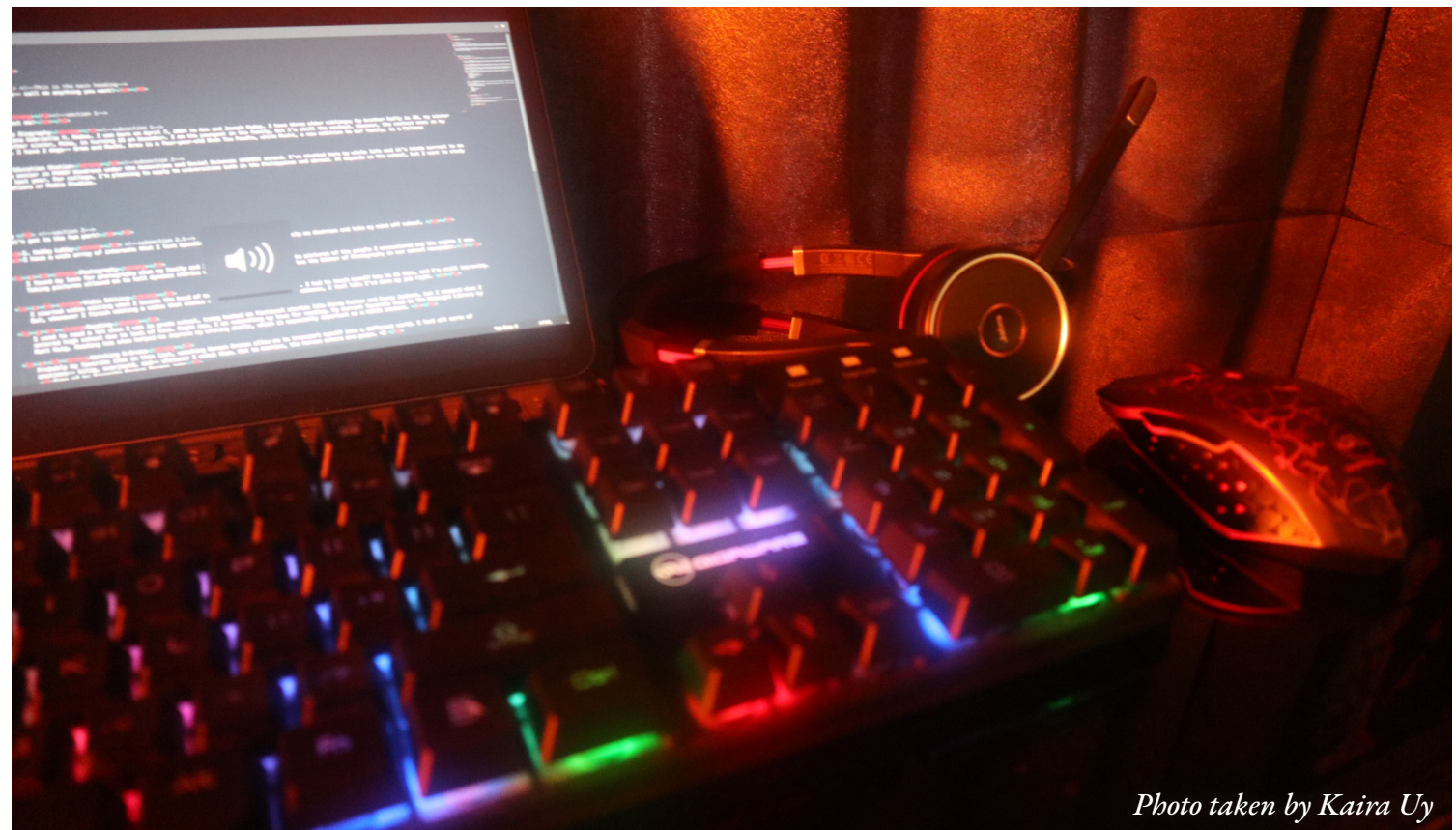


Photo taken by Kaira Uy

that I learn about coding, the more I see that it’s needed in the school curriculum as early as possible. Everything is going digital. You don’t see anyone who hasn’t encountered a computer.”

But introducing coding in Woodrose is especially significant for an all-girls’ school. Ms. Pablo expresses that

Statistically, not a lot of girls are in computer science and I think it’s best to think of the subject as empowerment technologies especially because all the students are girls. The subject aims to teach girls to go beyond what is expected of them. It is an opportunity to break the stereotype and prove that girls can also code,

Aside from providing young girls a sense of empowerment, having more women in coding, she says, allows for more variety in the way activities are typically carried out within the tech industry.

Girls and boys have different ways of doing things. So having them both on the field gives us a variety of methods. There

are a lot of possible codes to get the same outcome, which we might never know if there are no girls in the workplace. So we aren’t limited to just how a man would think, but we get the option of how a woman would do it. You can get the best of both worlds.

In fact, the establishment of Code Tech, a high school club dedicated to learning and practicing coding in Woodrose proves that young women are not only capable of coding, but can take active interest in it as well. Katie Ramirez, the founder of the club shares “When I first brought up the idea to my co-founders, Marie and Bettina, they thought it was something really cool and impressive and that a lot would be interested in joining. Lo and behold, here we are right now”. Ramirez, who grew up as a daughter of computer scientists, developed a fascination with tech early on and plans to follow in the footsteps of her parents.

I think it’s something that people should learn now that we’re in the digital age. All industries will have to transfer online

one way or another. Like online classes for example. A lot of teachers had to take crash courses to adjust to the online setup, and what most people don’t think about is how what they learned was pre coded by someone else, like scheduling posts, for example. A lot of teachers are more comfortable doing that now. And this is just one product of coding

With CodeTech, she wants to help provide students in Woodrose with a space to learn the skills they need in tech.

People think it’s hard. It has a daunting connotation, so my co-founders and I wanted to create an inclusive and collaborative environment for it in Woodrose. When you first learn something, it is more effective if you learn it in an environment with other people. It isn’t really in our regular school curriculum aside from Senior High School. When we created it, we didn’t even have an EmTech class yet, and there was no org in Woodrose that could

expose students to the basics of computer science as a whole.

Coding as we know it today is still fairly new, but it definitely will play an even bigger role in the future. Ramirez thinks that

It has a really long way to go. There’s still a lot of labor going into things as small as search bars, for example. We aren’t limited to zeroes and ones anymore but it still isn’t at the most advanced it can be, I think, and it can still evolve.

Given how important coding is today, it is highly likely that in the near future, it could even become as essential to daily living as reading and writing. Right now, it is still a challenge for many, mainly because of its newness, but as Ms. Pablo points out, being able to grasp the skill can be a reward in itself in spite of the extra effort it takes. “It’s intimidating in the way that when you learn a new language, you don’t understand anything, but the more you learn about it, you are able to find empowerment.” ■

Crocheting Your Worries Away

by Orange Martinez

Crocheting, by definition, is needlework that consists of interlocking looped stitches formed with a single thread and a hooked needle. This form of weaving has fewer tools and techniques compared to knitting, which makes it a bit more accessible for all ages. In addition, the repetitive process of crocheting mentally stimulates the brain and allows one to relax and relieve themselves of stress.

The word “crocheting” itself originated from the old French word ‘crochet’ which means small hook. People also used the term ‘crochetage’ when making French lace in the 1600s. It is a single stitch that is used to join separate bits of lace together. These terminologies eventually evolved to the “crochet” we know today, a word used to define the hook and the craft.

In regards to the process itself, the origins of crocheting are quite unknown. Lis Paludan, a Danish author best known for their works on the history and techniques of crochet, suggested that crocheting could have come from Arabia, South America, or China. It is more likely, though, that crochet was developed through a Chinese technique or the French method called “tambouring.”

Back in the day, crochet was typically used for luxurious purses, making use of fine threads such as lace or silk; at present, crocheting has become a hobby that people have picked up on, making use of yarn thread instead of lace. Due to the pandemic that has sent countries into lockdowns, people are looking for a way to pass the time and relieve stress and crocheting happens to be one of the activities people have taken up.

According to Charu Suri from the Washington Post (2020), mental health experts agree that picking up on old hobbies and crafts is actually a positive and healthy way to get through the pandemic. Although the activity has resurfaced among youths amidst the pandemic, the benefits of crocheting have been discovered a decade before.

Studies from the early 2010s have shown that crafts like crocheting can promote healing. It calms one down by distracting them from the negativity surrounding them and allows people to still feel productive even while they are at home. Furthermore, the repetitive process of crocheting helps the brain relax while the feeling of productivity causes a release of dopamine, the ‘feel good’ chemical that makes one happy.

Sarah Limlengco, an alumna from PAREF Woodrose School and a student in the University of the Philippines Diliman, was one of the people who took up crocheting over the pandemic. She used to watch YouTube videos about crocheting when she was younger so the activity wasn’t so new to her, but she only actually picked up on the hobby during the pandemic because she wanted to make a gift for her friend’s birthday.

Crocheting was fulfilling for Sarah because it allowed her to take her mind off things and just focus on performing the stitches. She said “After a while, once the pattern becomes natural to you, the repetition becomes relaxing and comforting.” It also helped her feel productive even while she was at home because she was able to create something.

Sarah enjoys creating small Amigurumi designs, tiny Japanese stuffed toys that first originated in China. She adds that the feeling of finishing a design and possibly giving it as a gift to someone was something that tickled her brain in a good way!

From doing this small activity over the pandemic, Sarah learned that happiness doesn’t always come from grand achievements. Sometimes one can find joy in the simple act of making an owl keychain out of yarn or in completing a handmade stuffed animal. When asked if she would recommend crocheting to

her peers, Sarah immediately responded with a “yes!”

Just like Sarah, others can also find joy in this small activity. The stress relief one gets from the repetitive process of crochet and the feeling of being productive by being able to create something, might just be what one needs to get through the pandemic. Crochet products, such as stuffed toys, keychains, beanies and bags, can also be given as gifts for friends and family members.

The pandemic has left the country with a new normal and as a response, citizens have begun turning to activities that will keep them active and productive over the quarantine period. Crocheting is just one of so many and what we choose to take on as a hobby ultimately depends on our own personal interests. Any hobby, as long as it keeps one afloat during these times, is good enough. ■

Photo taken by Carmen Nolasco



Decoding The Fangirl

by Francesca Mariano

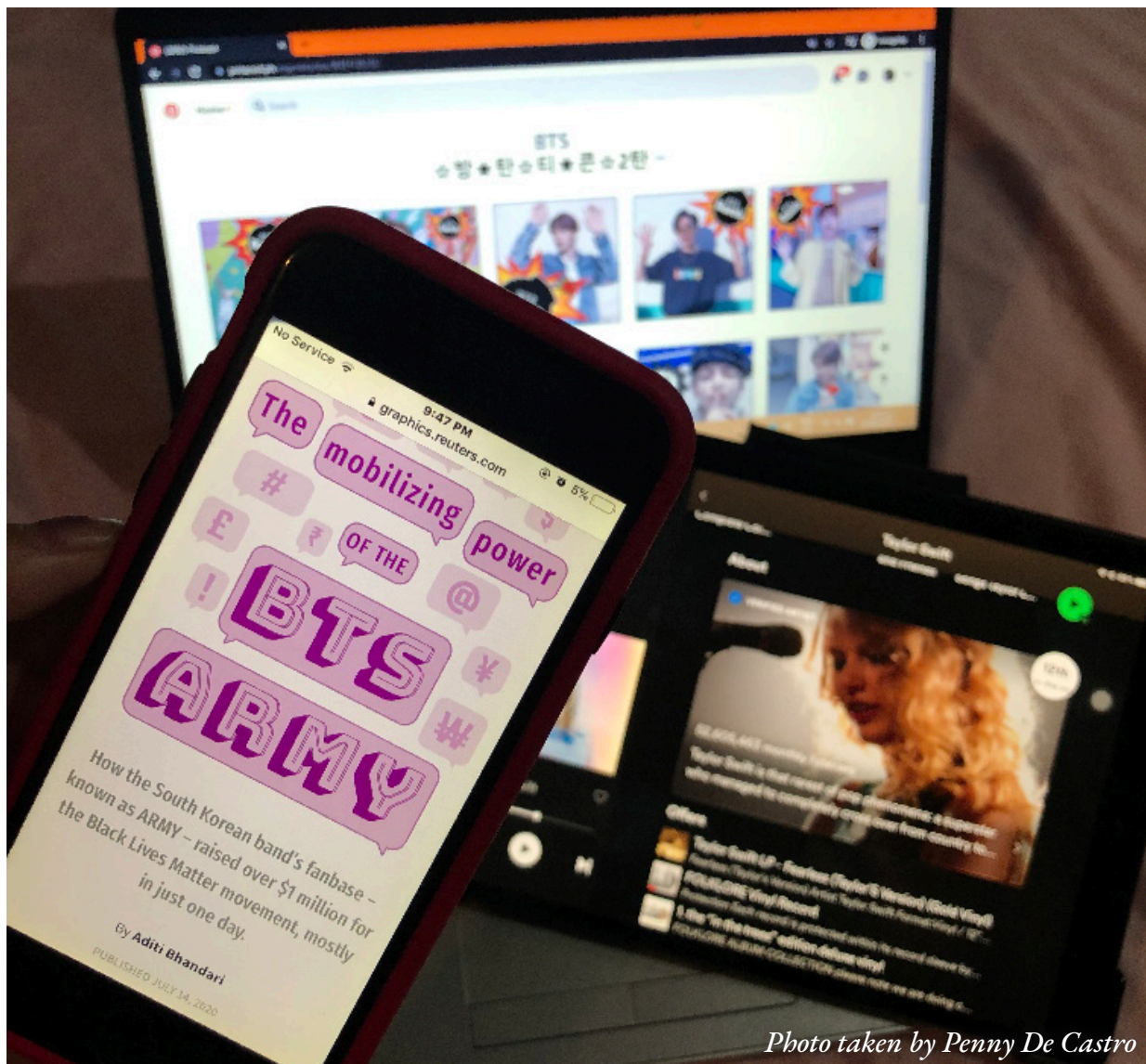


Photo taken by Penny De Castro

From the British-born Beatles to the South Korean group BTS, musicians have demonstrated their unique ability to unite generations and cross cultural, linguistic, and societal barriers. Their ability to set world records and cause unprecedented phenomena has kept the world mystified and intrigued. But perhaps the most eager for more, are the fangirls.

Oxford Languages defines a fangirl as “a female fan, especially one who is obsessive about comics, movies, music, or science fiction.” But what does a fangirl really mean? Are female fans automatically obsessive? Why are male sports fans not branded the same *obsessive* label? A male sports fan and a female music fan both spend hundreds on merchandise, both shout in their support for their idols, yet why is only one automatically labeled as *obsessive*?

Dr. Ruth Deller, a principal lecturer in Media and Communications at Sheffield Hallam University, explains the reason for this discrepancy. “Lots of different fans are seen as strange,” she says. “Some of that has to do with class: different pursuits are seen as more culturally valuable than others. Some of it has to do with gender. There’s a whole range of cultural prejudices.”

Indeed, these cultural prejudices have led to talented artists having their work initially dismissed. When the most legendary band of all time, The Beatles,

first put out their work, they were condemned by music critics, media outlets, and indeed, by most of the population. Their innovative approach to music was seen as too gimmicky, too crude, and as one record executive said “the dull sound.”

In the midst of the criticism, it was the fangirls, referred to as ‘the dull, the idle, the failures’ in a 1964 New Statesman article, who eagerly bought records, attended concerts, and generated public interest for the small band from Liverpool, England. By 1970, the Beatles had established themselves as “real” musicians who were brave enough to experiment with various music genres. They helped spread British culture across the globe, becoming the primary ambassadors of the British Invasion. Their success led to the reception of the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire medals from Queen Elizabeth II amongst other accolades, such as an induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Today, they are one of the UK’s most valued cultural icons and one of the most highly regarded musicians of all time.

Another act who was initially dismissed as an ingenuine artist is the K-pop group *Bangtan Sonyeondan*, or BTS. Despite their growing global prominence, BTS was subjected to xenophobic and racist remarks by major media companies and social media users alike. As non-English speaking artists, their work’s authenticity was disputed by Western

media outlets once they began topping global charts. Many questioned their artistry, refusing to believe that international fans liked them for their music due to language barriers. Nevertheless, they are currently the biggest musicians in the world today, achieving groundbreaking local and international success. These include numerous historic Billboard awards, an American Music Award for Artist of the Year, and two Grammy nominations. When asked about their success, the group credits their loyal fanbase, ARMY.

The achievements of these prominent groups also extend to their fanbase. The Beatles, who openly kept a progressive stance with regard to social issues, influenced their fans in topics such as activism, collectivism, and anti-war policies. When it was announced that BTS had donated \$1 million to Black Lives Matter, BTS ARMY decided to match the donation and raised \$1.14 million within 24 hours, surpassing the group.

To gain a deeper understanding of fangirls, three high school students were interviewed about their experience being a fan, ensuring that an accurate and insightful analysis would be made.

Ysa, a 16 year-old self-proclaimed member of the BTS ARMY, said being a fan was a stress reliever and [source of] comfort whenever she felt tired, stressed or sad. This effect is more apparent as she became a fan during the Covid-19 lockdown. Her interest in BTS also gave her a creative outlet. K-pop, known for their intense choreographies, helped her improve her dance skills and foster her confidence. She improved her physical and mental wellbeing, and became more active in dancing and aware of how to prioritize school work with her other interests.

Another 16 year-old BTS fan, who chose to remain anonymous, credits being a member of the ARMY as instrumental to her mental health. Being a fan for five years helped her gain a sense of belonging and self-knowledge. She also pursued new hobbies, such as cooking, particularly Korean recipes. This fan also learned to explore and appreciate other music genres beyond what she typically listened to.

Meanwhile, a 16-year old Swiftie, who also chose to remain anonymous, has credited being a long-time fan of Taylor Swift for revitalizing her interest in piano, poetry, and literature. Her 10 years of being a fan have not gone to waste as she has become happier, and has found “healthy outlets of escape.”

Despite the positive impact being a fan has given them, they were not spared from the negative stereotype of fangirls. The ARMY interviewees were ostracized and questioned, particularly when K-pop was a new and unfamiliar phenomenon in the Philippines. BTS’ manner of dressing and grooming, such as wearing makeup and feminine clothing style led to others dismissing fans as “cringey.”

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All three also admitted that their screen time has increased, their sleeping patterns have deteriorated, and for one, her focus on her academics lessened in the beginning. For another, FOMO, or the fear of missing out, has made her scared to sleep or distanced away from her phone. She acknowledges that staying up-to-date through her social media feeds keeps her inspired and motivated.

Yet despite the occasional negativity, all three affirm that they still enjoy being a fan. As long as they set boundaries for themselves, they felt that being a fan was still worth it. According to them, being a fan lets them have something to look forward to, such as new content. This gives them an energy booster when they're tired, and a calm escape when they are overwhelmed.

Indeed, having someone to look up to has also positively benefited many fans as watching their favorite artist grow as a person inspired them to improve themselves too. Whether it was a boost in confidence, or a reminder to be more empathetic, their experience as a fan impacted them on much a

deeper, more human level. The second interviewee put it best as she said, "I was a stressed, burnt-out kid when I stumbled upon them. Looking back to those days, being their fan was almost like a way for

me to heal. I definitely still have to grow, but being their fan made me focus on the positive side of things rather than the negative. I learned a lot about myself, and also earned a few friends along the way."

Watching their favorite artists struggle before achieving immense success has also taught the interviewees important lessons. They were inspired to explore new hobbies, pursue what they love, and achieve their goals. In our second interviewee's words, "With all their achievements, they make me believe that I too, could achieve wonderful things."

It is undeniable that there have been instances where some fans go beyond what is acceptable. There have been multiple occasions where artists are stalked, cyberbullied, and the like. However, to generalize all fangirls with this unfavorable stereotype would be a disservice. How can fans who fight for social issues be labeled as shallow-minded children? How can fans who have strived to be better versions of

themselves be dismissed as obsessive and without depth? Should a small percentage of fans determine the public perception of the rest?

In today's world where social media reigns, idolizing and admiring public figures is easier than ever. While artists continue to provide polished images and content, they also get to share personal insights which help fans feel more connected. With easier access to international media, time zones and language barriers are not a hindrance as they were before.

As shown by the stories shared by fangirls and the substantial impact artists have on society, whom we admire can affect our choices and mindset. If artists have the power to influence, then fans must ensure that the artists they admire are indeed admirable. If the artists we look up to leave us with a positive impact, we can choose to harness this positivity, and fight for the causes not only the artists advocate for, but also the causes we ourselves determine are in need of support. We must be inspired by artists not for the sake of glorifying them, but because they encourage something within ourselves too. ■

Lessons of Hope:

WHAT WE CAN LEARN ABOUT SUPPORTING WOMEN IN LESSER-KNOWN SPORTS

by Isabel Peralta

"Nakaya natin," Hidilyn Diaz said shortly after her thrilling gold medal finish in the 55 kg women's weightlifting event at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Those words from Diaz are twice as riveting to me—a Filipina triathlete; a girl looking for success in a male-dominated sport; an athlete with a passion for a widely unknown sporting event with a small audience.

I often get asked by people what triathlon is, finding the question quite silly as it is something I've had the chance of knowing for a large fraction of my life. In that question lies a thought-provoking message—should we, as a nation, start turning our attention to lesser-known sports? Even more so, should we, as a nation, start turning our attention to women in lesser-known sports?

Needless to say, my answer to that would be an indisputable YES! Why is it that we neglect to provide funding and support for the athletes in sports that are most

promising in terms of global success? Why is it that we fail to recognize that many of the athletes that have great potential to prosper, are women in the sporting events that are usually not sought after?

The Philippines has produced excellent athletes like the aforementioned weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz, brilliant golfers like Yuka Saso and Bianca Pagdanganan, and talented skateboarders like Margielyn Didal, all of whom were gold medalists in their respective sports at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, and delegates for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games.

What about Filipina boxing extraordinaire, Nesthy Petecio? Or Elreen Ando, who set a Philippine record in the women's 64 kg weightlifting event? Ever heard of Kiyomi Watanabe, our very best and most-decorated judoka?

Don't even get me started on outstanding triathletes, Kim Mangrobang and Kim Kilgroe, who dominated the women's triathlon event at

the 2019 SEA Games. The former being who we have our money on to see at the next Summer Games.

Yet, the two common variables among all these prodigious athletes are that they are women, and wildly underfunded. These athletes only get a fraction of the media attention that players in the PBA get, consequently contributing to the lack of endorsements and sponsorship deals that they desperately deserve.

Hidilyn Diaz, despite showing the world that she has earned her stripes by bagging

a silver medal at Rio 2016, was still on her knees, asking for financial support for her Tokyo 2020 bid.

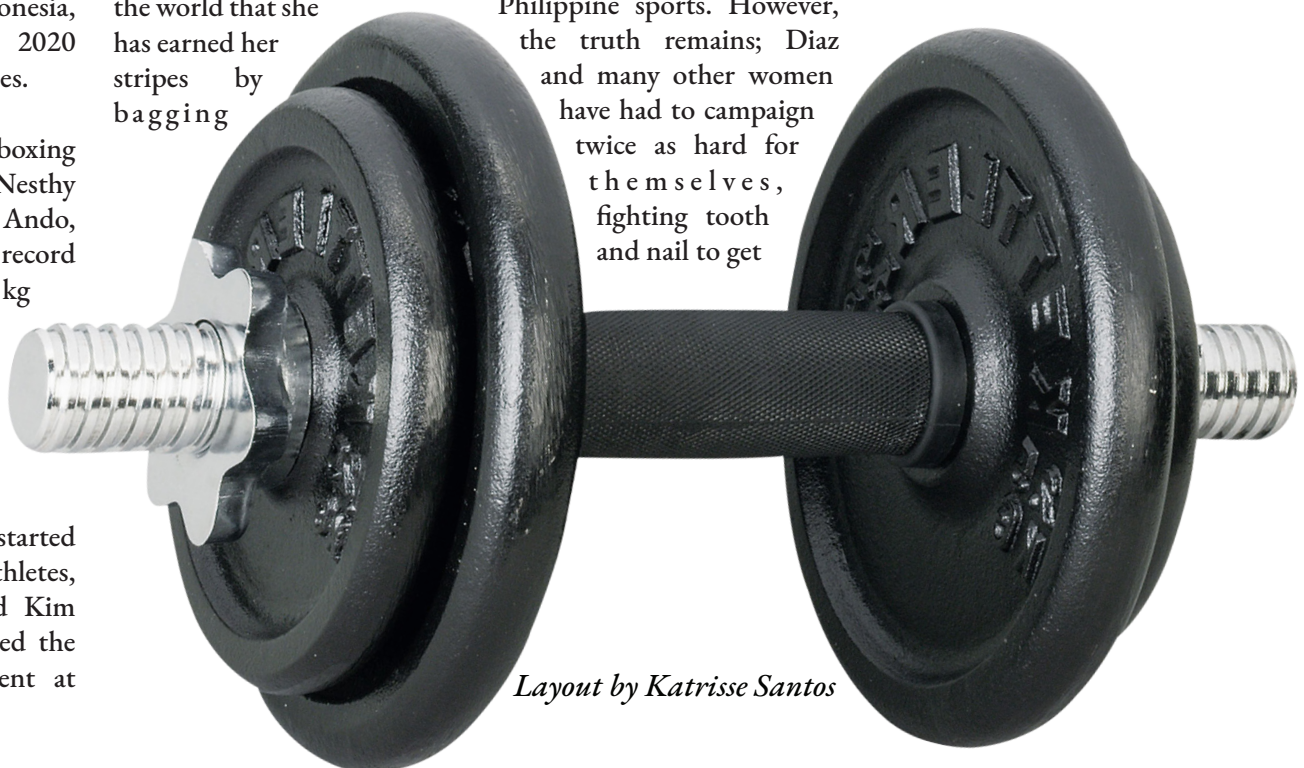
Therefore, the big questions are begging to be asked once again—why do we continue to reject the fact that our most winnable sports are the ones with the least support from the masses, the media, and the government?

After Diaz's Olympic victory, I wish I could say that we are entering a time of change, finally shining the spotlight on the overlooked gems of Philippine sports. However, the truth remains; Diaz and many other women have had to campaign twice as hard for themselves, fighting tooth and nail to get

to where they are now.

I am not suggesting that we should completely neglect the Philippines' love for basketball in favor of these under-appreciated sports, but as I write about this, it would be ignorant of me not to recognize the Philippine government's refusal to adequately fund ALL sports.

The bottom line is, now is the time to support women in lesser-known sports because we've proven time and again that *nakaya natin*. ■



Layout by Katrisse Santos